(b) The Department of Secondary and Higher Education has launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT) @ Schools' during the 10th Plan period. Under the ICT @ Schools scheme, financial assistance is provided to the States/UTs for imparting computer education and computer aided education in Government and Government-aided Secondary and Senior Secondary schools on the basis of CEPs submitted by them. Besides, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS)/Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) each would convert one school into SMART schools in each State/UT, KVS/NVS would also impart computer education and computer aided education to not more than 10 neighbouring schools within a radius of 3 to 4 kilometer. Further, DOEACC Society is engaged in computer education by availing the facilities available in computer training institution in the non-formal sector to generate qualified manpower. Also, Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) another society of Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, has various Post Graduate programmes and Diploma courses being conducted in different centres of C-DAC.

**Provisioning of rural telephones by Private Telecom Operator**

331. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the present number of rural telephone connections in the country, State-wise;

(b) whether it is a fact that despite major advancement in telecommunication technology penetration is very low in rural areas;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether it would be made mandatory on part of the private telecom operators to set up rural telephones in their respective circles, instead of asking to park a part of their revenues in the form ADC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEELAHMAD): (a) The number of rural telephone connections in the country as on 31-12-2004 was 1,30,37,333. The Telecom circle-wise details are given in the enclosed statement. (See below)

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The telecom operators are not keen to provide telecom services in rural areas due to the common perception that these are unremunerative. All the Basic Private Service Operators (BPSOs) who had roll out obligation for providing Village Public Telephones (VPTs) on the basis of old licenses, have migrated to Unified Access Service License (UASL) in November, 2003. According to the guidelines of UASL, there is no requirement of mandatory coverage of rural areas by the licensees. The requirement of access in rural areas would now be met from the Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund. However, rural tele-density has improved from 0.41 % to 1.20% during the Ninth Plan period. The present rural tele density is 1.68%.

(d) There is no such proposal at present.

***Statement***

*Telecom circle-wise number of rural telephone connections in the country as on 31-12-2004.*

| SI. No. | Telecom Circle | Telephone Connections (Rural) as on 31-12-2004 |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Andaman & Nicobar | 22,056 |
| 2 | Andhra Pradesh | 13,63.946 |
| 3 | Assam | 1,45,669 |
| 4 | Bihar | 4,09,660 |
| 5 | Chhattisgarh | 89,130 |
| 6 | Gujarat | 8,78,645 |
| 7 | Haryana | 4,15,697 |
| 8 | Himachal Pradesh | 3,80,427 |
| 9 | Jammu & Kashmir | 58,158 |
| 10 | Jharkhand | 1,04,193 |
| 11 | Karnataka | 8,80,648 |
| 12 | Kerala | 23,16,850 |
| 13 | Madhya Pradesh | 3,02,638 |
| 14 | Maharashtra | 14,16,154 |

| SI. No. | Telecom Circle | Telephone Connections (Rural) as on 31-12-2004 |
|---|---|---|
| 15 | North East-I | 59,202 |
| 16 | North East-ll | 52,164 |
| 17 | Orissa | 3,26,212 |
| 18 | Punjab | 8,75,340 |
| 19 | Rajasthan | 6,58,503 |
| 20 | Tamil Nadu | 8.89,671 |
| 21 | Uttaranchal | 1,04,961 |
| 22 | Uttar Pradesh (E) | 4,92,105 |
| 23 | Uttar Pradesh (W) | 1,91,841 |
| 24 | West Bengal | 6,03,463 |
| | TOTAL | 1,30,37,333 |

**Connectivity Speed of Data One and Triband**

332. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that BSNLand MTNL have launched its broadband services in the country;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that both the companies have launched above services only in selected cities of the country;

(c) if so, the details of cities in which broadband services have been launched; and

(d) the connectivity speed of Dataone and Triband and how they are faster than the existing VSNL's internet services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEELAHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has launched its Broadband service under th*e* brand name Data One and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) under the brand name Triband on 14th January, 2005.

(b) Presently, BSNL has launched services in 13 cities and MTNL in